

NSC BRIEFING

11 August 1954

PEIPING ADMITS FLOOD DISASTER

- I. Peiping now admits flood damage amounts to major disaster:
  - A. Before, Chinese Communists insisted that floodwaters under control and damage slight.
  - B. Now admit that six percent of China's cultivated land--about 23,000 square miles, nearly size of state of Indiana--has been inundated.
  - C. This land, mostly in rice-rich area of Central China, would normally grow over 10 percent of China's annual food crops.
- II. Peiping genuinely surprised by scope of disaster.
  - A. May have been fooled by temporary drop in Yangtze water level at Hankow in late July.
  - B. But river began rising again; by 10 August had reached record 57 foot level (previous high, in 1931, 53 1/2 feet).
- III. 1931 was year of most damaging flood in modern Chinese history.

A. Affected an area of 95,000 square miles: damage  
estimated at US \$1.3 billion.

B. In addition to millions in flooded cities, 25 million  
farm population hit.

IV. Present Chinese food purchases abroad insufficient to  
meet disaster.

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C. Moreover, Peiping has large rice export commitments:

270,000 tons to Ceylon for rubber; 200,000 tons to USSR.

V. Peiping's public (8 August) admission of flood damage sug-  
gests Chinese might now welcome foreign relief.

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C. Soviet aid to Peiping likely to be forthcoming:

Pravda first noted flood on 9 August, saying critical struggle being waged against floods in China.

D. Peiping's prestige in Orbit, emphasis on Sino-Soviet "friendship", would make relief gesture necessary.

VI. Also precedent for Communist acceptance Western relief.

A. Of Eastern European Satellites offered US emergency flood relief, East Germany and Hungary have accepted, Rumania politely declined, Czechoslovakia has not replied. Hungary also accepted Dutch offer of 50,000 guilders (US \$13,000).

B. East German press and radio has portrayed acceptance of "generous offer" as expression of East German policy of "furthering. . . international understanding."

VII. Communist China is in more awkward position, however, as regards any possible offer of US aid.

A. Peiping has always denied possibility of "genuine friendly aid" from US.

B. Peiping's internal program relies more heavily on

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anti-American propaganda than any Satellite.

C. Peiping would certainly prefer that aid come from  
Orbit, Asian "neutrals" or other states recognizing  
Communist China.